

How to Attract Purple Martins

By [Melissa Mayntz](#), About.com Guide

Filed In:

1. [Attracting Birds](#)



Use decoys to attract purple martins.

Rick Kimpel

Purple martins are large, iridescent swallows and highly desirable backyard birds, and attracting purple martins can be easy. Because they eat thousands of insects each day, do not require birdfeeders and can nest in compact colonies, birders only have to take a few steps to make their backyard suitable as purple martin habitat.

What Purple Martins Need

Like all birds, purple martins require four things for a suitable habitat: food, water, shelter and nesting sites. By creating a bird-friendly habitat with these swallows in mind, attracting purple martins can be simple.

Food

Purple martins eat flying insects, so no number of birdfeeders or [type of birdseed](#) will attract them. Instead, backyard birders should avoid spraying insecticides or pesticides on lawns, trees or shrubs, since doing so will eliminate the single food source these birds require. Instead, by attracting purple martins you can take advantage of their natural insect control and voracious appetites.

On rare occasions, purple martins will eat fine gravel to use as grit to aid their digestion. Having a secluded source of this gravel nearby can help attract the birds. Furthermore, they will also eat crushed eggshells as a calcium supplement during the nesting season, and providing the eggshells (dried and briefly toasted to be sterile and brittle) can encourage nesting purple martins to linger nearby.

Water

All birds require some source of water, and purple martins prefer large, natural water sources instead of [birdbaths](#). A large, long pond, lake or stream is the best source, since these birds drink in flight by scooping their bills into the water as they pass by. If a backyard birder has the room to put in a large water feature, choose an elongated design that gives purple martins adequate room for this fly-by drinking. Otherwise, it is easiest to attract purple martins if there are nearby natural water sources.

Shelter

Purple martins take shelter almost exclusively in artificial houses, and they will avoid brush piles and dense plantings for fear of lurking predators. Unlike many other birds, it is best to attract purple martins to open areas with little excessive shelter, as the birds will be more secure when they have a good visual range to survey.

Nesting Sites

Putting up appropriate [purple martin houses](#) is the best way to attract these birds. They are colonial nesters and large birdhouses with multiple compartments are best to meet their needs. The birds will be naturally attracted to homes painted white, which also reflect heat better and keep nestlings cooler. Both apartment-style houses and gourd houses are available, and creating clusters of houses will encourage large colonies of the birds to nest. Birdhouses for purple martins must be placed 30-120 feet away from large trees and other structures, as this will give them plenty of space for feeding.

In addition to providing appropriate houses for purple martins, supplying proper [nesting materials](#) can help encourage them to take up residence. A nearby pile of small twigs, grass clippings and leaves is perfect, and a muddy area is also useful as these birds use mud as a binder to hold their nests together.



Simple Steps That Actually Save You Money

Don't aggravate yourself. These green resolutions from MSN.com are worth the effort.

Give Up Plastic (and Paper) Bags

Cost: \$1

Do you opt for paper or plastic when at the grocery store? Neither is a good choice. Twelve million barrels of oil were used to make the 88.5 billion [plastic bags](#) consumed in the United States last year. And it takes four times more energy to make paper bags. The best choice is reusable shopping bags made of cotton, nylon or durable, mesh-like plastic. Put a few reusable shopping bags in your car so you have them handy on your next shopping trip. And if you happen to forget your reusable bag (as we all do!), choose [paper](#) if you will recycle it or plastic if you will reuse or recycle it.

Stop Buying Bottled Water

Cost: \$14.98 for aluminum water bottle

Did you know that it takes 26 bottles of water to produce the plastic container for a one-liter bottle of water, and that doing so pollutes 25 liters of groundwater? Don't leave a trail of plastic water bottles in your wake! Stop buying bottled water. Use reusable water bottles instead made from materials like stainless steel or aluminum that are not likely to degrade over time. If you choose a plastic water bottle, check the number on the bottom first: Plastics numbered 3, 6 and 7 could pose a health threat to you, so look for plastics numbered 1, 2, 4 or 5.



Stop Receiving Unwanted Catalogs

Cost: \$0

Every year, 19 billion catalogs are mailed to American consumers. All those catalogs require more than 53 million trees and 56 billion gallons of wastewater to produce --

and many of us don't even know how we got on so many mailing lists! So grab that stack of catalogs piling up on your coffee table and clear out the clutter. Visit CatalogChoice.org to put a stop to unwanted catalogs. Within 10 weeks, your mailbox will be empty of unwanted catalogs. A less cluttered mailbox means less pollution, less waste and less of the pollution that causes global warming.

Give Up Hot Water (At Least in the Clothes Washer)

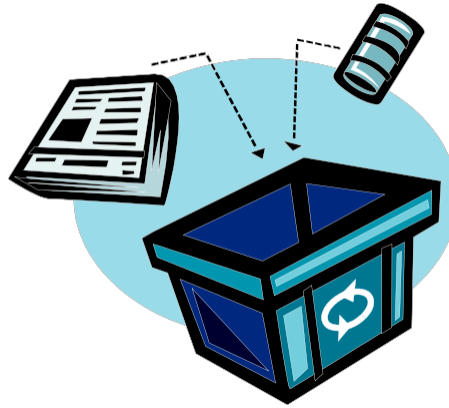
Cost: \$0

Did you know that only 10 percent of the energy used by a typical washing machine powers the motor? About 90 percent of the energy is used to heat the water, and most clothes will come clean in cold water. So switch your washing machine's temperature setting. For heavily soiled clothing, change it from hot to warm, but otherwise try to wash and rinse most of your clothing in cold water.

Give Up Paper Towels

Cost: \$6.95

No matter how you look at it, paper towels create waste. During your next trip to the grocery store, buy some reusable microfiber towels, which grip dirt and dust like a magnet, even when they get wet. When you are finished with them, toss the towels in the wash and reuse them again and again. They are even great for countertops and mirrors. If you absolutely have to use disposable towels, look for recycled products. If every household in the United States replaced just one roll of virgin fiber paper towels (70 sheets) with 100 percent recycled ones, we could save 544,000 trees.



Recycle

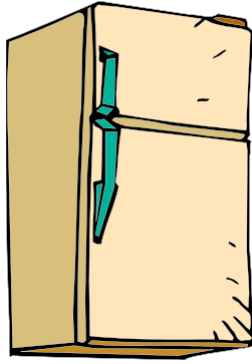
Cost: \$0

For every trash can of waste you put outside for the trash collector, about 70 trash cans of waste are used in order to create that trash. To reduce the amount of waste you produce, buy products in returnable and recyclable containers and recycle as much as you can. The energy saved from recycling a single aluminum can will operate a television for three hours! If your community doesn't provide containers for recycling, designate a bin in your garage for recyclables to make it easy for you and your family to recycle things like the newspaper and aluminum cans.

Run a Fully Loaded Dishwasher

Cost: \$0

If you have dishwasher, use it. Running a fully loaded dishwasher -- without pre-rinsing the dishes -- can use a third less water than washing the dishes by hand, saving up to 10 to 20 gallons of water a day. Simply scrape large pieces of food off your dishes and let the dishwasher handle the rest. And by using the air-dry setting (instead of heat-dry), you will consume half the amount of electricity without spending a dime.



Lower the Temp in Your Fridge

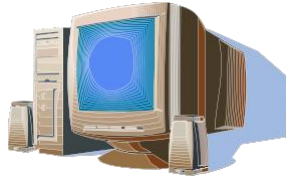
Cost: \$0

As one of the biggest appliances in your kitchen, the refrigerator is also one of the most power hungry, accounting for 10 to 15 percent of the average home energy bill each month. Get your fridge running in tip-top shape. First, set the refrigerator thermostat to maintain a temperature between 38 and 42 degrees (F). This temperature will protect your food from spoiling while saving electricity. Twice a year, clean the condenser coil at the back of your fridge. Condenser coils tend to get dusty, making them less efficient.

Give Up 2 Degrees

Cost: \$0

Electric power plants are the country's largest industrial source of the pollutants that cause global warming. By snuggling under a blanket on the couch on a snowy winter night instead of turning up the heat, or enjoying the breeze from a fan in the height of summer instead of turning up the air conditioning, you can save pounds of pollution, as well as some money off your utility bills. Set your thermostat in winter to 68 degrees F (20° C) or less during the daytime and 55 degrees F (13° C) before going to sleep or when you are away for the day. And during the summer, set thermostats to 78 degrees F (26° C) or more.



Stop Idling

Every moment spent idling your car's engine means needlessly wasting gas, as well as rougher wear on your vehicle. Idling for more than 10 seconds wastes more gas than is needed for startup. Overall, Americans idle away 2.9 billion gallons of gas a year, worth around \$78.2 billion.

Turn Off Your Computer

Save energy and wear and tear on your hardware by shutting down your computer at night. You'll save an average of \$90 of electricity a year. The Department of Energy recommends shutting off your monitor if you aren't going to use it for more than 20 minutes, and the whole system if you're not going to use it for more than two hours.

Wash Your Laundry in Cold Water

An easy way to clean green is to turn the dial on your washing machine to cold. Most loads don't need hot water, and 90% of the energy used by washing machines goes into heating. The higher the water temperature, the higher the cost to you.

Reduce Junk Mail

Around 100 million trees and 28 billion gallons of water are used to send junk mail to Americans every year, according to greendimes.com. You can stop 75% of unsolicited mail by registering on the Mail Preference Service on the Direct Marketing Association Website (www.dmachoice.org/ for a fee of \$1) or by telephone 212-768-7277. You can also write them at PO Box 9008, Farmington, NY 11735-9008 Within 90 days, most unsolicited mail will stop.

There is also a toll free number to stop mailings of credit card offers. One call to 1-888-5-OPT-OUT will reach the major national credit bureaus, Equifax, Experian and Trans Union.



Pack a lunch.

Instead of stopping at the lunch truck when mid-afternoon hunger hits, reach for a packed lunch in a reusable lunchbox. Check out reusable sandwich containers as an alternative to plastic bags, and don't forget the reusable silverware

Print on Two Sides

Know what? It's not that hard to print on both sides of the paper. But even though most software programs give that option, most of us still print only on one side of the page. Consider this: the U.S. alone uses 4 million tons of copy paper annually, about 27 pounds per person. Save dough and your local landfill. Print on two sides.

Stop Wasting Gas

Cost: \$0

Increase your gas mileage by checking your tire pressure. More than a quarter of all cars and nearly one-third of all SUVs, vans and pickups have underinflated tires, according to a survey by the Department of Transportation. If every American kept his or her tires properly inflated, we could save 2.8 billion gallons (10.6 billion liters) of gasoline a year -- and help curb global warming pollution -- so inflate the tires on your car or truck and continue to do so once a month or as necessary.



Mail-Back Programs: Recycling from Home

Mail-back programs offer collection and recycling/disposal of products by sending them via mail. There may be fees associated with mail-in program recycling, so it's best that you call or visit the website before sending in products. They may have special packaging requirements or instructions for you to follow.

- **MDOT Cell Phones for Soldiers**

This organization uses the funds received from recycling to help soldiers abroad talk to their families at home.

Telephone: 601-359-7105

Location

401 North West Street, Suite 1121,
Jackson, MS 39201

<http://www.gomdot.com>

- **Sprint Project Connect**

Overland Park, KS 66251

(866) 364-5680

http://www.sprint.com/responsibility/communities_across/project_connect.html

Cell phones

Sprint Project Connect is a free service for anyone who has wireless phones, batteries, accessories and data cards that they no longer use, regardless of makes and model, carrier or condition. The net proceeds from all equipment collected will fund and promote free Internet safety resources for kids. To recycle your wireless device, pick up a free, postage-paid envelope at any Sprint-owned store nationwide. Or, print the free, pre-paid shipping label on the website.

- **Crazy Crayon Recycle Program**

721 Village Rd

Pelican Lake, WI 54463 (800) 561-0922

http://www.crazycrayons.com/recycle_program.html

Crayons

This program takes takes unwanted, rejected, broken crayons and recycles them into fresh, new crayons. It accepts all crayons, but please know that crayons from foreign countries will be sorted out and discarded since they may contain lead and plastics. E-mail LuAnn at LuAnn@CrazyCrayons.com with additional questions.

- **Recycle Your Phone Books**

<http://www.yellowpages.com/recycle>

1-877-88RECYCLE (1-877-887-3292)

As your new AT&T Real Yellow Pages telephone directories are delivered, it is the perfect time to recycle your old phone books. That's why AT&T Real Yellow Pages and YELLOWPAGES.com have joined Keep America Beautiful to make recycling last year's phone books easy.

- **Nike Reuse-A-Shoe Program**

3552 Avenue of Commerce

Memphis, TN 38125 (800) 344-

6453

<http://www.nikereuseashoe.com/>

Shoes

This program accepts any athletic shoe that does not contain metal. You can visit the website to download a shipping label. There are also drop-off locations in some Nike Factory Stores.

- **St. Simon Publishing**
Germantown, TN 38183
(901) 219-6718
<http://stsimonpublishing.com>
Book recycling
Please visit the website for shipping information.



Reduce Paper Waste with Catalog Choice!

Catalog Choice is a service that lets you decline paper catalogs you no longer wish to receive. Reduce the amount of unsolicited mail in your mailbox while protecting the environment.

<https://www.catalogchoice.org/>

Source: *Keep America Beautiful*

<http://www.kab.org>

Plants by Season

June 3, 2011

SPRING

Daffodils – *Narcissus spp.* (non-native)*



Virginia Spring Beauty – *Claytonia virginica* (native to MS and US)



Tuberous Vervain (Vebena) – *Verbena rigida* (non-native)*



Narrowleaf Blue-eyed Grass – *Sisyrinchium angustifolium* (native to MS and US)



Carolina Desert-chicory (False Dandelion) – *Pyrrhopappus carolinianus* (native to MS and US)



Crimson Clover – *Trifolium incarnatum* (non-native)*



Eastern Bluestar Amsonia – *Amsonia tabernaemontana* (native to MS and US)



Wild Blue Phlox – *Phlox divaricata* (native to MS and US)



Lyreleaf Sage – *Salvia lyrata* (native to MS and US)



Winter Vetch – *Vicia villosa* (non-native)*



Pink Evening Primrose (Pinkladies) – *Oenothera speciosa* (native to MS and US)



Golden Tickseed (Calliopsis) – *Coreopsis tinctoria* (native to MS and US)



Ox-Eye Daisy – *Leucanthemum vulgare* (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*) (non-native)*



Roundleaf Sundew – *Drosera rotundifolia* (native to MS and US)



Dwarf Sundew – *Drosera brevifolia* (native to MS and US)



Spoonleaf Sundew – *Drosera intermedia* (native to MS and US)



LATE SPRING – EARLY SUMMER

Pale Pitcher Plant (Yellow Trumpets) – *Sarracenia alata* (native to MS and US)



Common Self-heal (Heal-All) – *Prunella vulgaris* (native to MS and US)



Prairie Phlox (Downy Phlox) – *Phlox pilosa* (native to MS and US)



Prairie Daisy Fleabane – *Erigeron strigosus* (native to MS and US)



Obedient Plant – *Physostegia virginiana* (native to MS and US)



Butterfly Milkweed – *Asclepias tuberosa* (native to MS and US)



Queen Anne's Lace – *Daucus carota* (non-native)*



Common Mullein – *Verbascum thapsus* (non-native)*



Firewheel (Indian Blanket) – *Gaillardia pulchella* (native to MS and US)



Japanese Honeysuckle – *Lonicera japonica* (non-native)*



Clasping Coneflower – *Dracopis amplexicaulis* (native to MS and US)



Bitterweed (Yellowdicks) – *Helenium amarum* (native to MS and US)



SUMMER

Giant Silver Mullein – *Verbascum bombyciferum* (non-native)*



Morning Glory Vine – *Ipomoea cordatotriloba* (*Ipomoea trichocarpa*) (native to MS and US)



Black-eyed Susan – *Rudbeckia hirta* (native to MS and US)



Ohio Spiderwort (Bluejacket) – *Tradescantia ohiensis* (native to MS and US)



Crimson-eyed (Swamp or Rose) Rosemallow – *Hibiscus moscheutos* (native to MS and US)



Common Yarrow – *Achillea millefolium* (native to MS and US)



LATE SUMMER – EARLY FALL

Common Sneezeweed – *Helenium autumnale* (native to MS and US)



Cardinal Flower – *Lobelia cardinalis* (native to MS and US)



Hollow Joe-Pye-Weed – *Eupatoriadelphus fistulosus* (*Eupatorium fistulosum*) (native to MS & US)



Giant Ironweed – *Vernonia gigantea* (native to MS and US)



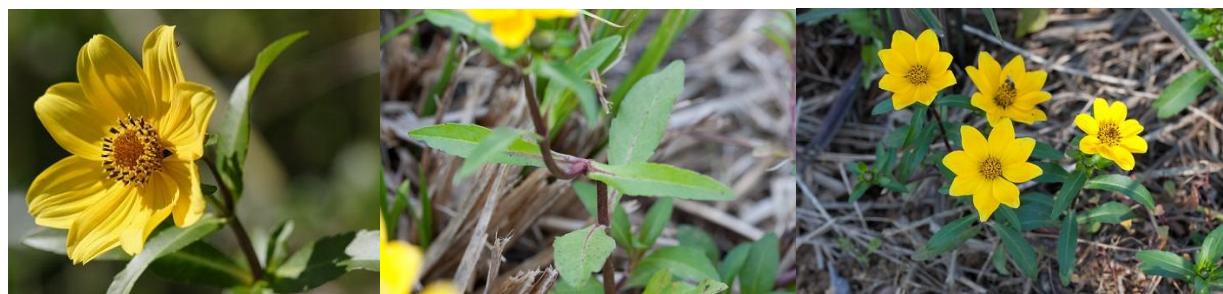
Baldwin's Ironweed – *Vernonia baldwinii* (native to the US but doesn't occur in MS)



Bearded Beggarticks (Tickseed Sunflower) – *Bidens aristosa* (native to MS and US)



Smooth Beggartick (Bur Marigold) – *Bidens laevis* (native to MS and US)



Blue Mistflower – *Conoclinium coelestinum* (*Eupatorium coelestinum*) (native to MS and US)



Kudzu – *Pueraria montana* (*Pueraria lobata*) (non-native)*



Candyroot – *Polygala nana* (native to MS and US)



FALL

Swamp Sunflower – *Helianthus angustifolius* (native to MS and US)



New England Aster – *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* (native to MS and US)



Canada Goldenrod – *Solidago canadensis* (native to MS and US)



Canada Goldenrod (smells like licorice) – *Solidago altissima* (native to MS and US)



Giant Goldenrod – *Solidago gigantea* (native to MS and US)

